

[Hill Villages]

THE VILLAGES

621 140

433 animals; and before roads were built, these villages brought
 [366] their surplus on donkey-back (or on the hoof) to Kardamili,
 [438] where it was put on board a small ship, and carried either to
 [491] Athens or to Kalamata, the local metropolis, some thirty-five
 [258] miles away on the rich Messenian plain. In addition, an oil-
 [464] pressing plant was constructed in 1929 in Kardamili which em-
 [388] ployed as many as a hundred persons at the height of the sea-
 son. Even when there were no olives to press, the plant kept
 open the year around by making soap and other products.

This was the basis upon which about 750 people were able
 to make a living in the village before the war. In recent years,
 however, the village has not prospered. The oil factory closed
 [258] down permanently in 1940, depriving the village of what had
 [491] been one of its most important resources. After the war, a new
 [438] road, built in 1949-50, destroyed the importance of the port.
 Instead of bringing their olives to Kardamili on donkey-back
 and selling them there, the peasants of the hinterland loaded
 their produce directly onto trucks bound for Kalamata or
 Athens.

The new system was an obvious improvement on older meth-
 ods of transport and marketing; but it meant that Kardamili,
 which for a few years between the wars had struggled toward
 becoming a miniature town, was compelled to sink back to a
 purely village status. One manifestation of this change is a de-
 crease in population. In 1940, the village had about 750 inhabit-
 ants; in 1950 the population totaled only 512. War losses were
 insignificant, although guerrillas did kill two persons from the
 village. The whole community was forcibly evacuated to Kala-
 mata in 1949 to prevent its exploitation by guerrilla bands that
 ranged even this far south. The evacuation was perhaps scarcely
 justified, however, since the guerrillas never again came near,
 and when the villagers returned in 1950 they found their houses
 intact.